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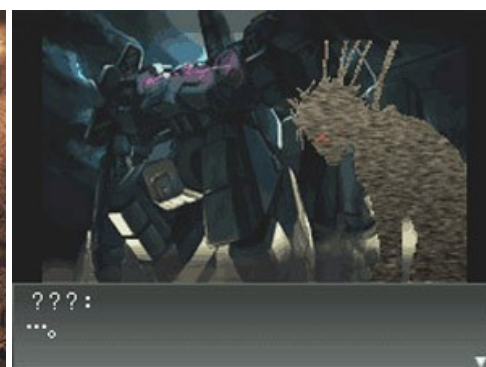
Front Mission 2089 (Border of Madness / 2089-II) (フロントミッション 2089) - Mobile / Nintendo DS (2005)



Japanese DS Cover



Front Mission 2089



Front Mission 2089

Front Mission 2089-I was a new frontier for the series, mainly as it was the first game made for the mobile phone. It was released in 2005 with periodic episode downloads, which were released on a monthly basis.

The story of Front Mission 2089-I takes place in 2089, one year before the 2nd Huffman Conflict. Players can choose to fight for the OCU or the USN, but story and character development remain the same in both cases. The only thing that changes with that option is the main character artwork. Since the game was remade for the Nintendo DS under the title Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness, the main characters will be discussed in that section.

Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness covers the entire 2089-I story. Rather than let the player choose which side to fight for, Border of Madness uses the OCU cast of characters from 2089-I. While 2089-II was not fully included, parts of it are included as a means to tie the two games together. New plot elements were added to help tie the 2089 mini-series into the main series, along with recurring characters from the other games.

Characters



Front Mission 2089



Storm

The main protagonist, Storm is a mercenary and a former OCU soldier. He belonged to an OCU unit known as B.A.T.S., but resigned from his post for unknown reasons. Storm travels to Huffman Island in search of employment and was recruited by Falcon.



Falcon

Falcon is an OCU commander who is assigned to working with mercenaries on Huffman Island. Perceived as a boring and dull man, Falcon prioritizes his work above all else. He does, however, treat mercenaries as if they were members of the military.

Front Mission 2089-I is essentially a watered down Front Mission 1st in the area of visuals. One notable change is the character artwork, which is noticeably more anime-influenced than the other games. This isn't much of a concern as mobile phones aren't necessarily built for video games. The music is mostly the same as in Front Mission 1st as well, with some tracks from Online. Aside from the presentation elements, Front Mission 2089-I plays out like Front Mission 1st. There is a ranking system for missions like in Front Mission Alternative and 3, there's really nothing new for this entry in the series. Therefore, the game can be seen as a way for newcomers to be introduced to Front Mission. Front Mission 2089-I is a Japan-only release and will remain as such due to its nature as a mobile phone game.

Front Mission 2089-II

The continuation of Front Mission 2089-I, Front Mission 2089-II was released for mobile phones in 2006. As with its direct prequel, periodic episode downloads were made available on a monthly basis.

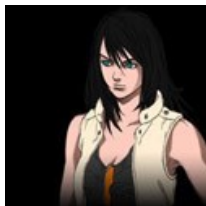
The story of Front Mission 2089-II picks up where 2089-I ends. The game takes place towards the end of 2089 and covers the events leading up to the Larcus Incident. Even though it is a direct sequel, Front Mission 2089-II uses a completely new cast of characters. Characters from Front Mission 2089-I do appear in the game, but play a minor role in the storyline.

Characters



Tornado

The main protagonist, Tornado is an OCU soldier who works for the Chariots mercenary group. He was sent to Huffman Island to assist the Chariots in border patrol duty. Along with mercenaries Champ and Oddeye, Tornado trains new wanzer pilots on Huffman Island.



Sana

Sana is an OCU captain and the commanding officer of the Chariots. After serving in war zones around the world, she was assigned to Huffman Island. Sana is good friends with Karen Meure and has known her since they enlisted in the OCU military.

Presentation-wise, Front Mission 2089-II is exactly the same as 2089-I. This isn't a bad thing though, as it is a direct sequel to that game. The realistic anime artwork is still intact and the aural elements have been recycled so expect to hear Front Mission 1st and Online music. Game design is where Front Mission 2089-II makes all of its changes. Although the game plays out like Front Mission 1st, it adopts the job system used in Scars of the War. Players are free to control their characters' growth, but get the most out of them through their specialties. Skills can also be removed and re-equipped at any given time. Weapons are also rebalanced to act more like they would in other Front Missions. Melees, for example, can't hit aerial targets. Even the flanking mechanics from Front Missions 2 and 4 make their way into 2089-II. The game also has a survival simulator feature similar to the one found in Scars of the War. Like the first episode, Front Mission 2089-II is a Japan-only release and will remain as such due to its nature as a mobile phone game.

Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness

During a survey taken for the Front Mission Mobile games (2089-I and 2089-II), it was reported that fans wanted ports of them for gaming systems. In response to the general consensus in the survey, Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness was released in 2008 for the Nintendo DS.



Front Mission 2089 II



Front Mission 2089 II



Front Mission 2089 II



Front Mission 2089 II

Graphically-speaking, Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness is a step up from its mobile phone counterparts. The battlefields and sprites are on the same level as Front Mission 1st. The modernized backgrounds and realistic anime artwork from the 2089 mini-series are retained and look better than before. Instead of head shots of the characters, they're shown in full body and convey a large amount of movement and expressions. A new addition to the game is manga-style still images, which are used to present the cut-scenes. For music, Border of Madness is an interesting combo of tracks from Front Mission Online, 1st, 2, 3, and 4. Some of the tracks have unusual placements in the game and these results in a disjointed aural experience. Lastly, the sound effects are recycled from Front Mission 1st.

As far as game mechanics go, Border of Madness is an unusual mixture of borrowing elements from other Front Missions, like in 2089-II, while still playing like the original. Elements like armor coating and Links make their way into the game. Unlike Front Mission 2089-II, Border of Madness doesn't do enough of this to radically change the way it's played. There is no job system, skills can't be removed, only some weapon types are rebalanced, flanking is non-existent, and the Links lack the same level of depth found in the other games. In the end, Border of Madness is simply Front Mission 1st with more balance and strategic depth. This isn't exactly a bad thing, but the effort feels a little lacking in the grand scheme of things.

For what it is, Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness is a decent attempt to merge the 2089 mini-series into one game. It's a shame that the whole 2089-II story couldn't be included, but some of it is better than none. There's a lot of recycling in its presentation and game design, not to mention the questionable placing of the music tracks. Despite these flaws, Border of Madness has its merits and ultimately is worth playing. The interface is now touch screen-friendly and is easy to use. Newcomers can rejoice in a tutorial system that explains the game's features in a clear manner. The excellent level design goes a long way in making the battles strategically diverse and engaging. Although Front Mission 2089: Border of Madness has only been released in Japan, the possibility of an official English localization still exists, however slim.



Front Mission 2089 II



Front Mission 2089 II



Used DS Front
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\$12.53
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Free Shipping



JAPAN Front
Mission 2089
\$21.12
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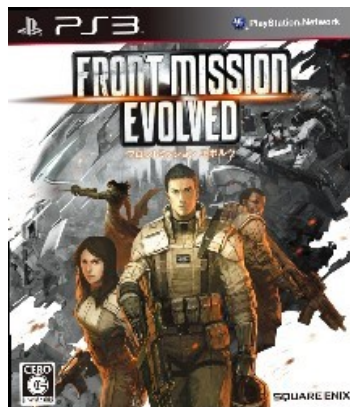
Used Nintendo DS
Front Mission 2089:
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Front Mission Evolved (フロントミッション エボルヴ) - Xbox 360 / Playstation 3 / PC



American Cover



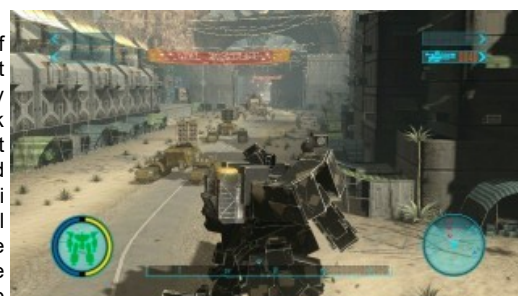
Japanese Cover



Front Mission Evolved

Officially unveiled in 2009, Front Mission Evolved was a third-person shooter spin-off released for the PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and PC in Fall 2010. This was the first entry that was developed via an East-to-West collaboration. Art direction was handled by Imaginary Friends Studios in Singapore. The music was scored by Garry Schyman of Bioshock fame. Game design was handled by Double Helix in USA. Square Enix's role in Front Mission Evolved involved story elements, but in a rather surprising move, this was handed over to Motomu Toriyama of Final Fantasy XIII fame. No one from PDD6 other than Shinji Hashimoto, the producer, was involved in its development. Set away from the original storyline in 2171, Front Mission Evolved is a story reboot. The story revolves around the destruction of a USN orbital elevator, which leads to a new war between the OCU and the USN. The main protagonist is a USN engineer named Dylan Ramsey, who gets caught up in the ensuing chaos.

Front Mission Evolved's visuals have a very arcade-like feel, through the use of bright,



Front Mission Evolved

uncomplicated color palletes. This extends to the wanzers and character designs, which are less gritty and more cartoony than other Front Mission titles. It's great if you're yearning for a throwback to the arcade days, but not so much from a technical standpoint. For a mid-generation PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 title, it looks very outdated and looks like it belongs on the PlayStation 2. On the other hand, Garry Schyman's musical score is a nice fit for Front Mission Evolved's atmosphere. The sound effects are also good, but the Transformers-like sounds that play when wanzers move feels very out of place in Front Mission. Likewise, the voice acting isn't very good and feels very stiff in execution.

Front Mission Evolved takes inspiration from Front Mission: Gun Hazard and Online for its single player and multi-player modes respectively. In the single player campaign, the player switches between three modes of play: wanzers, infantry, and gunship. Wanzers and infantry modes play identically the same, with minor differences. For example, there are no customization elements in infantry mode. Gunship mode is a new addition to the Front Mission fold; playing out like a rail shooter, players control a large gunship and must clear the battlefield of enemies. The constant change between the three modes is nice and keeps the game from getting stale. The problem is, all of them aren't developed enough to differentiate the game from a typical third-person shooter. The level design stays largely the same, and there's very little need to experiment with different setups to beat the campaign.

Front Mission Evolved's multi-player mode also suffers from the same problems. While there is a robust, Call of Duty-style progression system to encourage players to invest more time in it, the multi-player mode doesn't have lasting power. With only four (five through downloadable content) standalone game modes, a 4-on-4 maximum player cap, and a randomized matchmaking system that prevents players from creating their own teams, Front Mission Evolved quickly becomes a tedious chore to play online. Additionally, the game balancing for online play is missing. As better parts are rewarded for continuous play, new players are at a disadvantage against those who have already invested time into multi-player.

It's a shame that Front Mission Evolved turned out the way it did because the game had signs of greatness in it. Double Helix mentioned in interviews that many features were cut out of the game; these include online co-op play for the story campaign, the ability to freely board and disembark from wanzers, more environmental interactivity, and a more involved multi-player mode. Furthermore, a significant portion of the story was removed for the final product. While the story removal is a debatable issue due to Motomu Toriyama's poor writing skills (all other Front Mission stories have been penned by talented writers with film and TV credentials), the game design removals aren't. What could have been a great re-imagining of Front Mission: Gun Hazard turned out to be another generic third-person shooter with mecha elements.



Front Mission Evolved



Front Mission Evolved



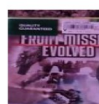
Front Mission Evolved



Front Mission
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Front Mission Merchandise

Like most series of video games, Front Mission also has its own line of [merchandise](#). Front Mission has spawned action figures, art books, data books, game controllers, films, novels, mangas, mouse pads, posters, radio dramas, soundtracks, and even vinyl records. The films, novels, mangas, and radio dramas are noteworthy as they have helped Front Mission achieve success in other media, effectively creating a second "home" away from the games. Planned in 1994 and authored by the series' writers, these expanded universe supplements explore the civilian perspective, showing a more personal, character-driven side of the story. In fact, because they contain new story content and better bridge the gaps between the games, these expanded universe materials are key to understanding the series in its entirety.

Since virtually all of the Front Mission merchandise is in Japan, importing through an online retailer or otherwise is the only way to get them for those outside of that country. And unfortunately, a lot of the merchandise are very rare nowadays.



Front Mission Manga

Front Mission Series: The Fan Translation Project

In December 2007, a group of loyal long-time fans of the series banded together and created the Front Mission 5 Fan Translation Project. Originally, the group's goal was to create an unofficial English localization for the game. However, around the time of the project's completion and release in December 2009, the group changed their name to Front Mission Series: The Fan Translation Project. At the time, the group revealed that unofficial English localizations had begun for Front Mission 2 and Alternative. In addition, the group has announced that they are working on other projects, such as a series plot guide titled "The Classified Documents" and articles about the series' design and lore.

Ultimately, the group's new goal is to educate people outside of Japan about the series, from what makes it unique to any future products like the upcoming Front Mission Evolved. Given how fragmented the fan base is outside of Japan, it's a pleasant surprise that some people are taking a stand in trying to unite these fans. With old Square Inc. and Square Enix failing to properly handle the series overseas, these brave and indomitable fans seem determined to finish the job the company failed to do for years. For more information about this group, check their website at frontmission.info.

Conclusion

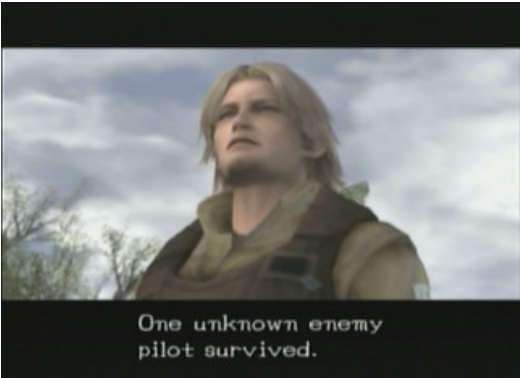
Front Mission is a true diamond in the rough. It's a series that takes pride in its diverse visual/aural presentation, solid play mechanics, and exceptional storytelling. It boasts an unprecedented level of depth, intricacy, and realism very rarely seen in video games today. Although the series certainly won't appeal to everyone, those who approach it with an open mind will find a lot to enjoy. It's real shame that the series has largely stayed in Japan, and people outside of the country can only experience the tip of the iceberg.

What makes it even more remarkable is how the series was extremely well planned. Unknown to virtually everyone outside of Japan, Toshiro Tsuchida planned the entire series from the storytelling aspect in 1994. With his writing team, Tsuchida mapped out the major stories and the main storyline of the series; the video games and their expanded universe supplements were the end result of this. When the planned final game in the series, Front Mission 5: Scars of the War, was released in the end of 2005, a huge sigh of relief from the PDD6 team could be felt in their old development blog (which is now unfortunately out of service). Many developers, especially from the original Front Mission team, made one very big posting with their thoughts on the long journey, about how big the series became, and thanked all the fans who supported them.

At the time of this writing, Front Mission has celebrated its 17-year anniversary. Front Mission Evolved was released, and fared poorly in sales. Toshiro Tsuchida left Square Enix as of February 28, 2011 and with his departure, it seems likely that Front Mission will come to an end. This doesn't mean that Front Mission is incomplete - the series has outlived its original goal by six years as of this writing, possibly more as its other media entities show signs of life. Front Mission has made its mark in the industry one of the earliest video game series to pioneer cross-media storytelling, and do so with great success. Even though it's been forgotten in the West, in Japan the series is seen as a beloved heirloom and a benchmark for future video game entities wishing to dabble into the art of cross-media storytelling.

Links

[Front Mission Series Translation Project](#) Info about the English versions.
[Front Mission.org](#) Premier English source for Front Mission info. Hasn't been updated in awhile though.
[Front Mission Shrine](#) Complete guide for the first game at RPG Classics.
[Front Mission Official Website](#) Surprisingly comprehensive for an official site. In Japanese though.



Front Mission 5 (Fan translated)



Front Mission 5 (Fan translated)



Front Mission 5 (Fan translated)

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